

Message

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Sent: 3/16/2015 6:33:05 PM
To: 'Smith, Kathleen' [ksmith@usgs.gov]

JONATHAN ELLIS - Associated Press - Monday, March 9, 2015

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) - It was billed as an informational meeting. A chance for Black Hills residents to learn more about a controversial proposal to mine uranium near Edgemont.

But when the meeting in Hot Springs ended on the night of Feb. 7, 2013, project opponents felt they had been snowballed with a sales pitch for the mine. Mark Hollenbeck, the project manager for mining company Powertech USA, had given a glowing appraisal of the project. Benjamin Snow, president of the Rapid City Economic Development Corp., touted uranium and energy production as a boon to the Black Hills.

Of particular concern to opponents was a presentation by Ray Johnson, a scientist with the U.S. Geological Survey who had been studying the Dewey-Burdock site on behalf of the Environmental Protection Agency. Johnson's half-hour presentation left mining opponents questioning whether he and the federal government were on the side of Powertech.

"I remember making the comment when I left that (Johnson) and Ben Snow must have been on the payroll of Powertech, because they were really selling snake oil at the meeting," mining opponent Rick Summerville told the Argus Leader newspaper (<http://argusne.ws/1E0YY7G>).

Project opponents eventually filed ethics complaints with USGS regarding Johnson.

The Argus Leader filed a Freedom of Information Act request last year for emails that Johnson received or sent about the Powertech mining proposal at Dewey Burdock. Powertech's bid to mine at the site of an old uranium operation has been among the most contentious issues in South Dakota in years. The company is currently trying to acquire federal and state permits for the project.

Read more: <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2015/mar/9/former-federal-scientist-at-center-of-uranium-mine/#ixzz3UZhv33sT>

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